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17. ABSTRACT (MAX. 250 WORDS) Based on the belief that children mature at different rates of speed and should have schools geared to their individual needs and differences, the Milwaukie, Oregon elementary schools instituted a nongraded primary system.

In the nongraded program, the primary is divided into nine levels rather than three grades. The work of the first through third grades is covered in the first eight levels, and the ninth level is devoted to enrichment. Because children advance to the next level only when they are individually ready, the possibilities of failure and unnecessary repetition are avoided. Placement in first year is determined by readiness tests and teacher judgments. Progress is reported through parent-teacher conferences and report cards. Classrooms are exchanged at various times for story telling or other activities; classes of two and three levels are grouped for such activities as music, so that children mix with other children and teachers at all levels.

If the primary program is completed by a child in two years, he is moved to fourth grade only if his social, emotional, and physical maturity are equal to his academic progress. Otherwise an enrichment program is individualized for him.

The total primary experiences of children in nongraded schools are the same as those for children in graded schools, but the time schedule is less rigid. The program is based on reading; therefore level advancement is the result of mastery of reading skills. If the child has problems in arithmetic he will get individualized help with them at his new level.

The text is accompanied by charts showing ranges in mental ages, growth, and comparisons of traditional and nongraded organization.

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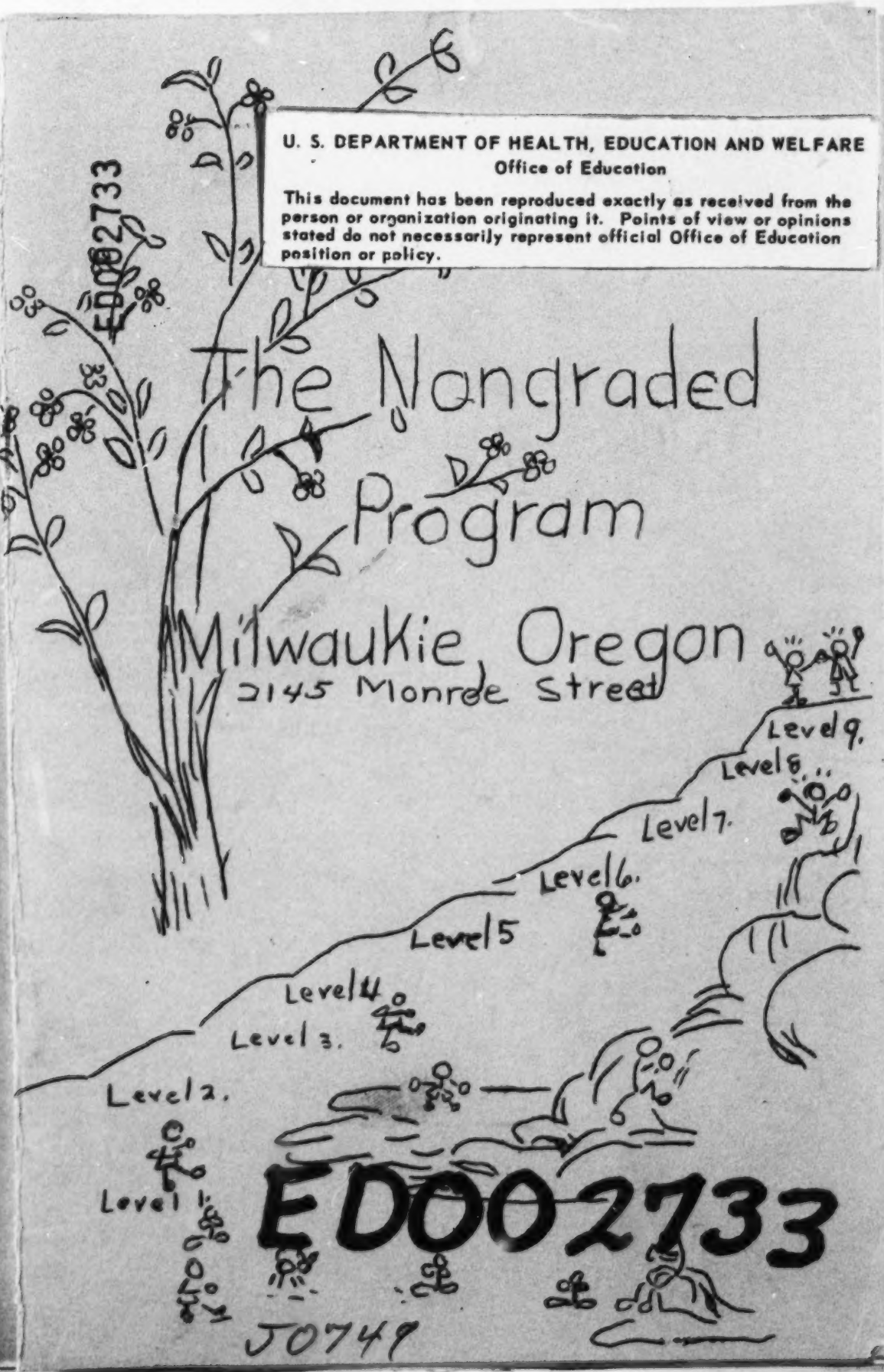
The Nongraded Program

Milwaukie, Oregon

2145 Monroe Street



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PARENT HANDBOOK

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FOREWARD

This handbook is a combined effort of the primary teachers in the Milwaukie Elementary Schools in Milwaukie, Oregon. It reflects a strong interest and desire on the part of the teachers to upgrade the teaching process. We feel that the graded structure, in vogue for well over a hundred years, is archaic for the primary child. All children mature at different rates. This basic fact points out the futility and frustration that has arisen as a result of the assumption that all six year olds are ready for their first year in school. Many children are ready for formal reading instruction before age six; many others are not. This is the problem faced by every teacher of entering first year children.

This very real problem prompted the teachers in the Milwaukie Elementary Schools to seek a different type of organizational approach that would meet the needs of all the children entering school. Each child should be accepted at his level of learning and encouraged to progress as far as possible. We feel that the nongraded meets this need more directly than any type of class structure devised to date.

This handbook is an attempt to answer the many pertinent questions from parents regarding the nongraded primary program.

The Milwaukie staff is to be highly complimented for their persistent, systematic pursuance of the basic philosophy of the nongraded primary.

WE BELIEVE THAT

1. Children do not grow and mature at the same rate of speed,

2. Children do not all walk, talk, or get ready to read at the same age,

3. Children have their own individual rate and pattern of growth,

4. Children must meet success in school,

5. Children who are happy and healthy make continuous progress,

6. Children, during the first years of their life in school, should have the opportunity to progress at their own rate, and

7. Children should have a school geared to their individual needs that has a program of instructional procedures that will consider the pupil differences.

GOALS

1. To dispense with traditional grade organization in order to allow for what appears to be a more nearly flexible learning situation.

2. To meet the great differences which are encountered among children.

3. To eliminate the pressure placed upon all children to complete an area of work within a precise period of time.

4. To afford the teacher a greater opportunity for individual counselling and guidance.

5. To provide for the program of the slow learning child without the dangers of continuous failure.

6. To permit an enrichment program for the rapid learning individual.

Individual differences raise two tasks for the elementary school to perform:

> To make sure that no child is given work beyond his capacity.
>
> To make sure that every child works up to the limits of his ability.

HOW AND WHEN TO MOVE CHILDREN TO ANOTHER LEVEL

We are incorporating nine reading levels in our non-graded plan to take the place of gradess one, two, and three.

Level one.....readiness program
Level two.....pre-primer
Level three.....primer
Level four.....first reader
Level five.....second reader
Level six.....second reader advanced
Level seven.....third reader
Level eight.....third reader advanced
Level nine.....enrichment

Children are moved from level to level within the room as they complete the requirements outlined for that particular level. When the teacher plans to move a child, or children, to a level in another room, this teacher and the new teacher sit down together and discuss the child, or children, being considered.

The check-sheets are studied thoroughly and, if mutual agreement is reached that this action is beneficial to the child, or children, the move is made.

- -

Parents will receive this form when a child moves from one room to another.

MILWAUKIE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Dear _____,

One of the advantages of the Nongraded Program is that an individual child may progress to a higher level when he shows readiness for it.

_____ will be visiting _____'s room, level _____. This move will be permanent unless otherwise notified.

Sincerely,

SAMPLE TRANSFER FORM

MILWAUKIE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL DISTRICT
2145 Monroe Street
Milwaukie 22, Oregon

TO: New School or Teacher

(School) students are in Nongraded classes.

_____ has been working on level _____.

Level 1 Readiness
2 Pre-primer
3 Primer
4 First reader
5 Second reader
6 Advanced second
7 Third reader
8 Advanced third
9 Enrichment

Years in primary program

1 2 3 4

(Circle)

This child is on page ____ in _____.
(reader)

This child is on page ____ in _____.
(arithmetic)

This child is in unit ____ in _____.

Teachers comments:

Cumulative records will be sent on request.

_____
Teacher

GENERAL INFORMATION

During the two years the nongraded primary program has been in existence, these questions have been most frequently asked. We hope that those who read this booklet will feel free to call the following school offices to ask questions not answered here:

Ardenwald	654-6464
Campbell	654-2757
Grammar	654-2324
Whitcomb	654-6005

We want to note that close communication and cooperation between home and school is essential to the continued success of this program. If problems or questions arise, don't wait--call your child's teacher or the building principal at the number listed above.

The following information is presented in question and answer form to facilitate reading and reference.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ON THE NONGRADED PROGRAM

Q. What is a nongraded primary?

A. The nongraded primary is an effort to encourage and promote a philosophy of continuous growth. This program is an organizational arrangement by which the needs of the individual child are more adequately met.

This arrangement erases the term grade and divides the primary into nine levels. The first eight levels constitute the work of the traditional grades one, two, and three. Most children will complete eight levels in three years and will continue to the fourth grade. Some children will take four years. A few children will complete eight levels in two years. These children proceed to an enrichment program in level nine before advancing to the fourth grade.

Because children proceed to the next level only when they, as individuals, are ready, the possibility of failure, retention, and unnecessary repetition is avoided. For example, if a child is in level three in June, he will continue, rather than repeat, level three in September. Each child will proceed at his own individual rate. He may spend more time in one level than another. His growth will be continuous in relation to his own ability.

Q. Is the nongraded program something "new"?

A. No. It was started twenty-five years ago in Milwaukee, Wisconsin and is used extensively throughout the states.

Q. What happens when children reach the fourth grade?

A. Students entering intermediate school continue to be grouped on the basis of individual performance.

Q. How will the child's progress be reported to the parents?

A. Through scheduled or special parent-teacher conferences, plus a regular report card.

Q. Are children upset or concerned about leaving their friends and present teacher to move into another room?

A. No. Teachers make a practice of exchanging class rooms for periods of 15 to 20 minutes at various times for story time, rhythms, or some other activity. In this way, children and teachers become acquainted. Often, classes of two or three levels are grouped for P. E. or music, thus making for more understanding.

Q. How are first year children grouped in the non-graded school?

A. Children's groupings are determined by the results of readiness tests, plus teacher judgment, in terms of the mental, physical, and emotional maturity of the child.

Q. Is there a problem involved in moving children into or out of the program?

A. Transfer students should pose no problems either moving into or out of a school. At the present time, when a student moves out of a building, he is given a transfer card that indicates reading and arithmetic levels, plus other related information helpful for placement. When a child comes into our program, he will be assigned to a group working at his reading level. Placements are usually temporary until we have time to check the student's level through the use of formal and informal testing.

Q. If a student completes the primary school program in two years, would he automatically be moved to the fourth grade?

A. A student's placement is based primarily on performance, level, and rate, but there are other considerations that must be made before changes take place. A child's mental, social, emotional, and physical maturity are weighed along with academic considerations. The move might not be made if the maturity level is such that it indicates problems may result from placement with older children. Instead, we would try to individualize a program of enrichment for the youngster until circumstances are more favorable for change.

Q. How would the enrichment program of level nine affect the fourth grade work?

A. Any child going through the enrichment program should be a stronger student upon entering the fourth grade. Whether or not the child can remain strong will depend on the effort and ability of the individual.

Q. Will the children know there is a slow and a fast room?

A. If children are interested in this, they will be able to figure it out for themselves. The time they would most likely be interested in knowing, and affected by this knowledge, is when the parents are overly concerned. If a child feels his parents are ashamed of his achievement, he is likely to be ashamed. If he feels his parents are proud of his achievements, whatever they may be, he will be proud.

Q. What is a level?

A. A level is a measurement of growth composed of requirements in the area of reading.

Q. How do you know when a child is ready to read?

A. One very important area needing special emphasis is careful observation of the child's background and performance by the teacher. Test results may indicate readiness for formal reading, but teacher observation is necessary to determine when best to begin the formal reading process. Premature formal reading instruction can be very detrimental to the child's wholesome approach to reading. The wise teacher, objectively observing his students, knows when the time is right.

Q. When will my child catch up with his age group?

A. We believe that if a child is to show continuous progress through school he must meet with success--and this success must be at his own rate of maturing. To tell a child that he must achieve this rate at an exact time each year is, we believe, totally unrealistic.

Q. Will a teacher have more than one level?

A. Yes.

Q. How do you know when children are ready to move to another level?

A. Children are moved from level to level as they complete the requirements outlined for that particular level. When the teacher plans to move a child, or children, to a level in another room, this teacher and the new teacher sit down together and discuss the child, or children, being considered. The check sheets are studied thoroughly and, if mutual agreement is reached that this action is beneficial to the child, or children, involved, the move is made.

Q. What is an important difference between a graded school and a nongraded school?

A. Learning experiences follow a less rigid time schedule. Over the total span of the elementary primary school period, a child in a nongraded school has essentially the same aggregate of experiences involving the same instructional materials and approaches aimed at the same major goals, but these experiences will be on a more flexible time schedule.

Q. How is a transfer student from a graded school placed in the nongraded program?

A. A child transferred from another school is given a reading test to aid in placing him in a particular level. He is then closely observed by the teacher until it becomes apparent that the placement is a proper one. If the placement is wrong, the child will be moved to another level, either up or down, and the parent will be notified of this change.

Q. How do children grow physically, emotionally, mentally, and socially?

A. Children grow according to a step by step pattern in which each stage of growth depends upon what has gone before and paves the way for what is to come. They progress from one stage of growth to another by moving forward and by dropping back. In their zig-zag pattern of growth, at times they seem to be at a standstill. Outwardly nothing seems to be happening, but inwardly they are building strength for another forward thrust.

Q. Is phonics taught in the nongraded program?

A. Yes. Phonics is one of the important reading skills taught.

Q. Why are reading workbooks used?

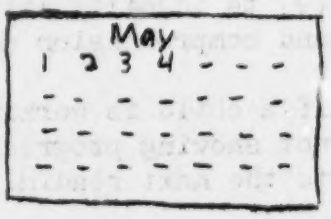
A. A teacher who works with a group of children day in and day out can be the best judge of pupil progress. For this reason, reading workbooks are used (1) to know a child belongs in a certain reading group and (2) to identify little, but important, word-learning and comprehension needs of pupils.

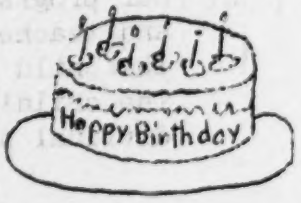
Q. If a child is working very well in reading but is not showing progress in arithmetic, will he move to the next reading level?

A. Our program is based on reading. If, after testing and teacher observation, it is thought advisable, the child will be moved to the next reading level. The child's teacher will continue to give him individual help with his arithmetic difficulties.

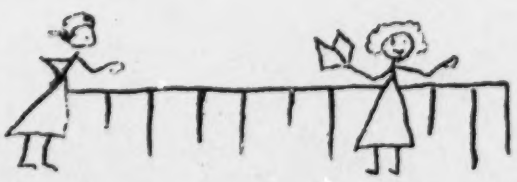
Children DO NOT advance by grades
Each child's progress is determined

NOT by a stop watch

NOT by a date 

NOT by a birthdate 

NOT by the neighbors

BUT 

BY his own growth,
achievement, maturity.

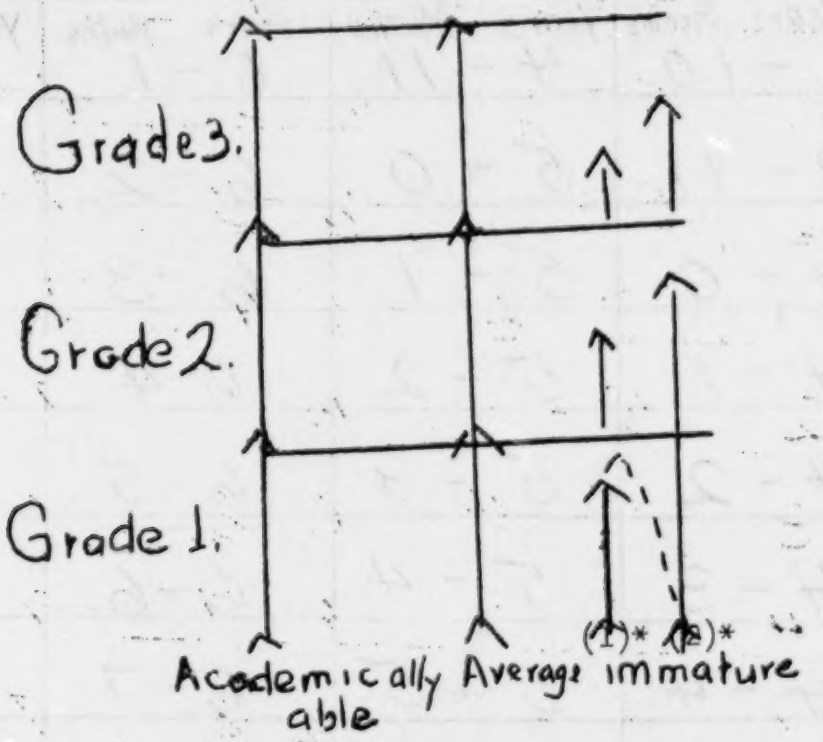
Wide Range of Mental Age of Incoming First Year Children

Years Months	Years Months	Years Months	Years Months
3-10	4-11	6-1	7-2
3-11	5-0	6-2	7-3
4-0	5-1	6-3	7-4
4-1	5-2	6-4	7-5
4-2	5-3	6-5	7-6
4-3	5-4	6-6	7-7
4-4	5-5	6-7	7-8
4-5	5-6	6-8	7-9
4-6	5-7	6-9	8-0
4-7	5-8	6-10	8-1
4-8	5-9	6-11	8-2
4-9	5-10	7-0	8-3
4-10	5-11	7-1	8-4

Range Four Years +

Children do not mature at the same rate

Traditional Graded School



The traditional school was geared to the average child, who progressed at a satisfactory rate of growth. But the academically able child was not challenged sufficiently, and much of his time was wasted.

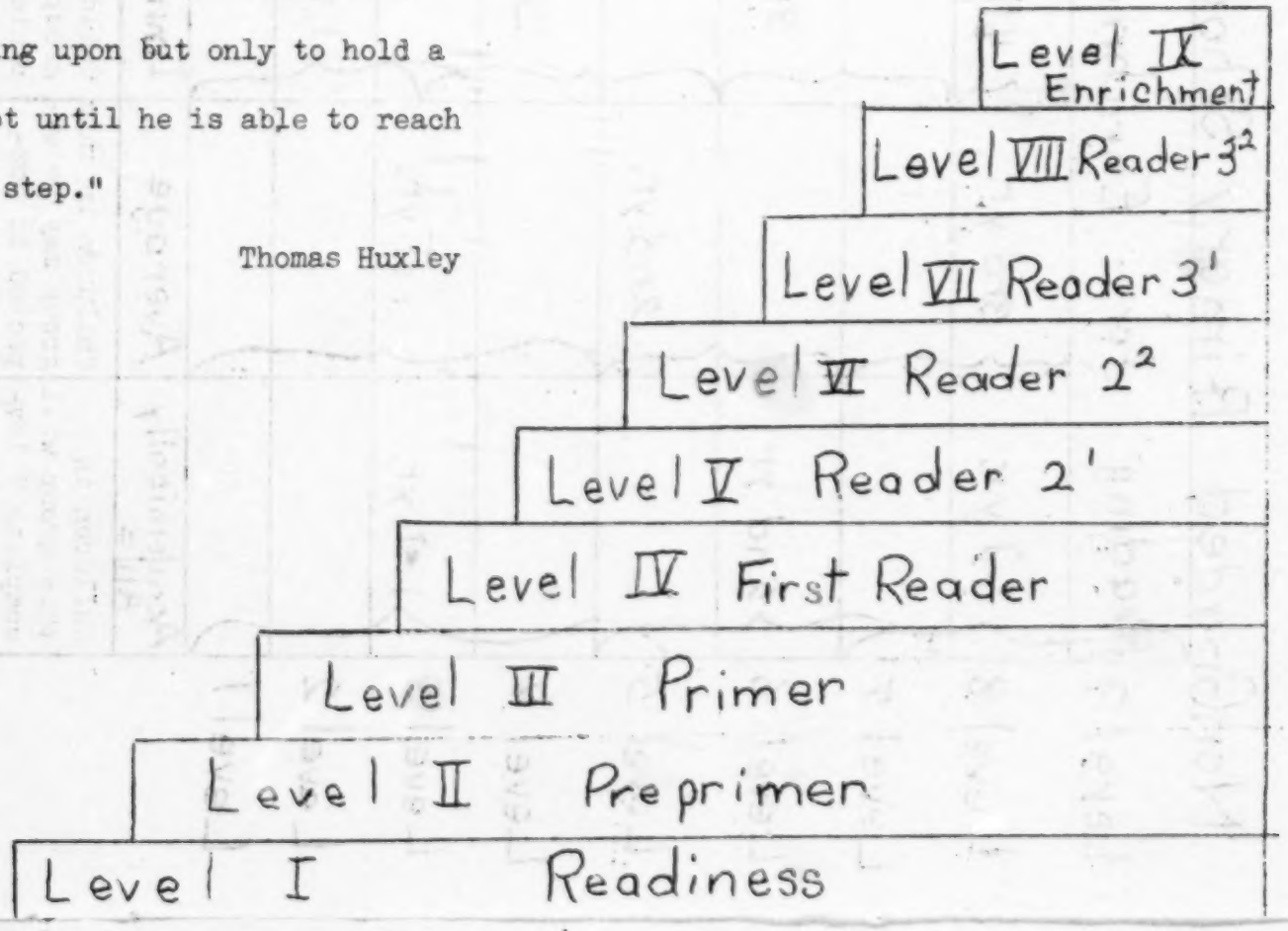
The immature child, on the other hand, followed one of the two courses. He was either socially promoted, losing out on more basic learning each year (1)*, or he was retained in a grade (2)*, thus being forced to repeat some material which he already knew. As the chart indicates, by the end of his third (or fourth) year he had not gained a satisfactory mastery of initial subject matter.

NonGraded Primary School

Level 9	Reading	for	Enrichment
Level 8	3rd yr.	3rd yr.	4th yr.
Level 7			
Level 6	2nd yr		3rd yr.
Level 5		2nd yr.	
Level 4			2nd yr.
Level 3	1 st yr.	1 st yr.	
Level 2			1 st yr.
Level 1			
	Academically Able	Average	Immature
	Children in this group will complete 9 levels in 3 yrs.	Children in this group may be expected to complete 8 levels in 3 yrs., with some children moving into the enrichment level at the end of the 3rd year.	Children in this group will complete 8 levels in 4 yrs., depending upon their rate of maturity.

"A rung of the ladder is not meant for resting upon but only to hold a man's foot until he is able to reach the next step."

Thomas Huxley



PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS

ARDENWALD

CAMPBELL

GRAMMAR

WHITCOMB

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